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COMMENTS ON BIRDS
FROM THE WESTERN PAPUAN ISLANDS

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1. *Birds from Kofiau Island*

Opportunities for visiting Kofiau Island (often called Kof-fiao, Kavijave, Kavijaaw, or Poppa in the literature) are few and far between. The island lies nearly ninety miles west of Sorong, regional capital of western Netherlands New Guinea, exposed to strong swells in the monsoon seasons. No boat anchorage exists and the small population of Besarese fishermen lives primarily on a few offshore rocky islets.

Odoardo Beccari visited Kofiau in July, 1875, on a schooner from Ternate, intending to spend several days (1875). His visit was cut short, however, by illness, and he spent only thirty hours there. Fortunately he was able to collect a total of 40 specimens during that time including topotypes of *Tanysiptera ellioti* and *Rhipidura vidua*. These forms had been taken in 1867 by David Hokum, an assistant of Mr. Hoedt a professional supplier of birds in Ambon. In 1875 also Bruijn's collectors from Ternate visited Kofiau, and except for an undated visit by Bernstein, this seems to have been the last ornithological visit to the Island.

During 1954 while studying birds in the Moluccas and Western Papuan Islands on a field trip,¹ my wife and I attempted

¹This field work was supported by research fellowship grants from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Science Foundation as well as funds from Yale and the Vose Fund of the Explorer's Club of New York.

to visit Kofiau. Neither patrol vessels nor commercial schooners were available, however, during our stay in New Guinea and an attempt to secure the services of an oil company flying boat also failed. Somewhat later my assistant, Jusup Khakiaj, managed to visit Kofiau in 1955 in a seagoing canoe accompanied by an Arafura bird hunter from Misool. He spent fifteen days from the 25 April to 9 May on the Island and was able to clamber about the rocky foreshore and climb a short way into the heavily forested interior.

Kofiau Island is about fifteen miles long, running in an east-west direction. It is heavily wooded, and the present settlements are essentially on the offlying islands such as Djailolo and Deer which lie just north of the mainland of Kofiau separated from it by a narrow sheltered channel. Kofiau lies outside of the 200 meter bank which marks the Sahul Shelf and includes such islands as Salawati, just off the New Guinea mainland, and Misool, some thirty miles south south-east of Kofiau. The island has several hills, one nearly a thousand feet tall, named Mata or Boemfoar.

The Boo Islets which lie about ten miles west of Kofiau include one islet Boo Ketjil an alternative name of which is Popa. This name has been applied to Kofiau in the literature. Beccari in his letter to Salvadori (1875, tom. cit.:707) speaks of "Poppa" as being a misnomer for Kofiau, which he spelt Kof-fiao. David Hokum in 1867 called the island Kavijaaw.

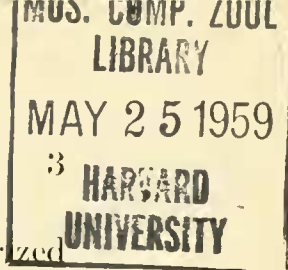
Jusup Khakiaj's collection while small, is of interest, as it appears to be the first made in perhaps eighty years. I am very grateful to the authorities of the American Museum of Natural History for permission to examine specimens in their care.

Of the thirty-one known species and subspecies from Kofiau, listed in the following pages it is interesting to note that they fall into these several categories.

Species of unknown affinities: one, *Ducula* species (seen but not collected).

Migrants: three, *Pluvialis dominica fulvus*, *Merops ornatus*, *Haleyon sancta sancta*.

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This leaves twenty-seven forms which may be characterized as follows:

1) Forms common to Moluccas and New Guinea; seven (= 27%).

Butorides striatus papuensis
Pandion haliaetus melvillensis
Megapodius freycinet freycinet
Chalcophaps indica indica
Caloenas nicobarica nicobarica
Pachycephala phaionotum
Nectarinia jugularis frenata

2) Forms representing New Guinea subspecies (includes Kai and Aru Islands): fourteen (= 51%).

Ptilinopus rivoli prasinorrhous
Ptilinopus viridis pectoralis
Macropygia amboinensis doreya
Opopsitta diopthalma diopthalma
Micropsitta keiensis chloroxantha
Geoffroyus geoffroyi pucherani
Cacomantis variolosus infustus
Aleyone pusilla pusilla
Pitta sordida nova-guineae
Coracina tenuirostre mullerii
Gerygone maguirostris occasa
Monarcha alecto chalybeocephalus
Monarcha guttula
Philemon novaeguineae novaeguineae

3) Forms representing Moluccan subspecies; two (= 7%).

Coracina papuensis melanolora
Dierurus hottentottus atrocaeruleus

4) Forms intermediate between species of the Moluccas and New Guinea; four (= 15%).

Tanysiptera (galatea) ellioti
Rhipidura rufiventris vidua
Monarcha julianae
Nectarinia sericea mariae

From the above it will be seen that while 51% of the Kofiau residents are overwhelmingly of close New Guinea affinity, almost one quarter or 22% represent forms either intermediate or more nearly Moluccan in their affinity, thus corresponding closely with the geographical position of the Island. That 15% of these represent endemisms is a remarkable example of the inherent speciation potential of such an island in such a geographic location.

Annotated List of Birds from Kofiau

In the following list, I have given the names of the collectors in brackets at the end of the discussion.

1) *Butorides striatus papuensis* Mayr

♀, May 8, 1955, wing 178 mm., culmen 65 mm. This specimen is small compared to Mayr's measurements (1940), but agrees with at least one specimen, although it was listed as possibly subadult, recorded by Van Bemmelen (1948:397).

(Khakiaj)

2) *Pandion haliaetus melvillensis* Mathews

♀ April 30. (Khakiaj)

3) *Megapodius freycinet freycinet* Gaimard

♀ May 2 (Bruijn, Beccari, Khakiaj)

4) *Pluvialis dominica fulva* (Gmelin)

An adult, unsexed, in breeding dress was taken in May. (Khakiaj).

5) *Ptilinopus rivoli prasinorrhous* Gray

(Beccari)

6) *Ptilinopus viridis pectoralis* (Wagler)

(Beccari)

7) *Ducula* sp.?

Jusup Khakiaj reported the presence of a large fruit pigeon on Kofiau. The birds were high up in forest trees, difficult to see, as always, and resisted his collecting efforts. He believes that the species represented is *Ducula rufigaster*.